

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (currently amended) A method of feeding a continuous strip (2) of packing material and a tear-off ribbon (3) to a user machine (4), the method comprising the steps of

unwinding said continuous strip (2) and said tear-off ribbon (3) simultaneously off respective reels (7, 13);

feeding the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) at the same speed along respective paths (6, 12) extending through a joining station (23);

joining the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) to each other at said joining station (23) to form a composite strip (25) of packing material; ~~and~~

feeding the composite strip (25) to said user machine (4) via a first traction assembly means (35) which ~~exert~~ exerts a first pulling force (F1) on the continuous strip (2) and tear-off ribbon (3) via the composite strip (25); and ~~being characterized by comprising the further step of~~

exerting, simultaneously with and in addition to said first pulling force (F1) and by means of a second traction assembly means (28, 29) arranged between the reel (13) for the tear-off ribbon and the joining station (23), a second pulling force (F2) on a portion (36) of said tear-off ribbon (3) extending between its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (13) and said joining station (23).

2. (original) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said second pulling force (F2) is exerted by winding said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) about a pulley (28), and applying to the pulley (28) a given drive torque (M) in the same direction as a travelling direction of said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) to the joining station (23).

3. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said pulley (28) is rotated by a motor (29), which is speed-controlled to impart to the pulley (28) a peripheral speed equal to the travelling speed of the tear-off ribbon (3).

4. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the sum of said first and said second pulling ~~forces~~ ~~force~~ (F1, F2) is a pulling force (F3) ~~at least~~ sufficient to unwind said tear-off ribbon (3) off its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (13).

5. (currently amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first pulling force (F1) is ~~at least~~ sufficient to unwind the continuous strip (2) off its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (7).

6. (currently amended) A device for feeding a continuous strip (2) of packing material and a tear-off ribbon (3) to a user machine (4), the device (1) comprising

first and second supporting shafts ~~means~~ (9, 15) ~~for~~ respectively supporting a first and a second reel (7, 13) powered to rotate, in use, at the same peripheral speed, said first ~~and said second~~ reel (7, 13) being for a reel (7) said continuous strip (2) and said second reel (13) being for a reel (13) said tear-off ribbon (3);

first and second guide pulleys ~~means~~ (26, 27) ~~for~~ respectively guiding the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) along respective paths (6, 12);

a joining station (23) through which both said paths (6, 12) extend[;]

~~joining means (22, 24) located at said joining station (23)~~ to join the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3) to each other to form a composite strip (25) of packing material; ~~and~~

a first traction assembly ~~means~~ (35) which ~~cooperate~~ cooperates with said composite strip (25) to transmit a first pulling force (F1) to the continuous strip (2) and the tear-off ribbon (3); and

~~being characterized by comprising~~ a second traction assembly means (28, 29) arranged between the reel (13) for the tear-off ribbon and the joining station (23) to exert ~~for exerting~~, simultaneously with and in addition to said first pulling force (F1), a second pulling force (F2) on a portion (36) of the tear-off ribbon (3) extending between its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (13) and the joining station (23).

7. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein said second traction assembly means (28, 29) ~~comprise~~ comprises a pulley (28) which cooperates with said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3); and a motor drive means (29) for rotating said pulley (28) and for applying to said pulley (28) a given torque (M) in the same direction as a travelling direction of said portion (36) of tear-off ribbon (3) to said joining station (23).

8. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 7, comprising wherein a logic unit control means (17) ~~are provided to~~ regulate said motor drive means (29) so as to rotate ~~impart to~~ said pulley (28) at a peripheral speed equal to said peripheral speed of said reels (7, 13) and, therefore, to a travelling speed of the tear-off ribbon (3).

9. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein the first and second traction assemblies are regulated so that the sum of said first and said second pulling forces ~~force~~ (F1, F2) is a pulling force (F3) ~~at least~~ sufficient to unwind said tear-off ribbon (3) off its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (13).

10. (currently amended) A device as claimed in claim 6, wherein said first pulling force (F1) is ~~at least~~ sufficient to unwind said continuous strip (2) off its respective ~~the relative~~ said reel (7).